



**2022 - 2023  
ANNUAL REPORT**

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Strive Niagara acknowledges the land on which our main office, child care Centres, and services take place is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and the Wendat peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. We acknowledge that there are 46 treaties and other agreements that cover the territory now called Ontario. We are thankful to be able to work and live in these territories. We are grateful to the First Nations, Metis and Inuit people who have cared for these territories since time immemorial and who continue to contribute to the strength of Ontario and to all communities across the province. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous peoples.

Acknowledging traditional Indigenous territories is one way to recognize contemporary and historical Indigenous presence and land rights. It is a small step towards dismantling the continued impacts of colonialism and undoing Indigenous erasure in our everyday lives. For more information on the purpose of Land Acknowledgements, check out [native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca).

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Education • Support • Family First

## OUR MISSION:

Through education and support, Strive Niagara empowers young families so that they can make informed healthy decisions, and transform their lives.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD PRESIDENT

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In reflecting on the challenges and accomplishments of Strive Niagara over the last year, we have come to recognize that to maintain an agency; we must engage our staff in providing leadership that shares a common vision and purpose. In October 2022, the Board of Directors and I began the development process for Strive Niagara to complete a 5-year Strategic Plan led by Gay Douglas and Associates. This process engaged staff while conducting focus groups to open up space for them to provide their feedback and amplify their voice. Throughout this process, Strive Niagara's main vision is to continue to offer the highest quality child care to families in our community and to provide a supportive space for young parents to complete their secondary school credits.

Across Ontario, it has been recognized that the retention of staff in the child care sector has been challenging over this past year. We realized how the shortage of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) has affected many of our sites. Periodically, it was necessary for us to close rooms to maintain the child to Educator ratios required by the Ministry. There have been many challenges that the early childhood education sector faced this year and the increase of the need for quality licensed child care.

Throughout 2022 - 2023 Strive Niagara made the gradual transition back to pre-pandemic procedures. We began inviting families back into the Centre's and child care rooms to bring back Educator and parent engagement, and to provide role modeling opportunities with the families.

In all Strive programs, staff and Educators continue to be creative in their program development and how they foster engagement with the parents/families and children. In our Strive program, many participants have been successful in achieving credits towards their secondary school diploma. This school year we are proud to share that we have 11 high school graduates. Their hard work and dedication from our Family Support Promoters and our participants has been a testament to the supportive nature of the program for young parents to achieve their goals towards graduation.

This has been a transitional year although there were challenges there were many new and exciting changes. We were happy to support parents/families and Educators by signing onto the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care plan (CWELCC). This plan has a positive impact on families and children in reducing the child care fees. We have been diligent in sustaining our mandate of high quality licensed child care. We have increased our child care capacity by providing services to additional areas within the Niagara Region. To offer our programming through our child care Centre's we hope to help parents/families to achieve a healthy developmental trajectory for all of the children who attend Strive Niagara's programs.



In January 2023, we took over and relicensed a child care site in Grimsby that offers child care spaces for 42 toddler and preschool aged children in the Town of Grimsby and Lincoln area. On May 11, 2023, we hosted a grand opening event to share with the community the support and services that Strive Niagara offers in our programs.

In September 2022, we held Strive Niagara's Annual Staff and Educators Meeting in our main office located in Welland. We enjoyed a meal together and recognized our Educators who were celebrating 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years of service with our agency. We are so grateful to have such dedicated and caring staff.

Throughout this past year with support from the Workforce Professional Learning Grant and the Workforce Capacity grant through the Niagara Region, we provided our Educators with many opportunities for professional development, health and wellness learning sessions, first aid and CPR training, and infant mental health training. We have begun to implement a mentorship program among our Educators. This provides an opportunity with the sharing of knowledge to enhance the level of skills and development of our Educators.

Strive Niagara implemented a new platform for registrations, forms, and payments called Digibot. Digibot is a web-based platform and was created by individuals who worked in the child care field and it is continuously being updated and enhanced to meet our needs. The Digibot platform is used by child care Center's to collect fees, complete registrations with families, record attendance for children in the program, direct messaging to families, and to complete additional documentation as needed. The platform is more cost-effective, and more time efficient for our supervisors and our finance staff. The feedback regarding the Digibot platform from our parents/families and staff has been positive.

We signed on with a human resources and health and safety service to support the organization with access to expert human resources and health and safety advice 24/7. They are providing support that meets all requirements of employment, health and safety, and ESA standards.

In April 2022, we were a grantee recipient of the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) Resilient Communities Fund grant. With this grant we received \$150,000 to complete much need upgrades to our HVAC mechanical systems within the main office and Welland Parent Child Centre. The air filtration system was upgraded to include a higher quality of air filters. The upgrades and work was completed in May and June of 2023. We are so grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their support.

Over this past year, we added new full-time administrative positions to our team that include the Director of Operations and the Administrative Assistant. The Director of Operations supports our child care Centre supervisors, assists with Ministry licensing, oversees staffing and recruitment efforts, mentors supervisors, and provides support for the executive director. The administrative assistant assists the executive director, supervisors, finance and administration department, manages the social media accounts, and updates documentation with the director of operations as needed. We are grateful to have both of these new positions to provide support within our team.

Another year comes to a close, and we would like to thank all of the Educators and staff for their hard work and dedication in supporting the families and children in program.

*Tracy Belcastro & Zach Dadson*





## **EXECUTIVE TEAM**

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### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Tracy Belcastro, RECE

### **DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**

Micki Horton, RECE

### **FINANCE ADMINISTRATOR**

Caron Hendry

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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### **PRESIDENT & CHAIR**

Zach Dadson

### **VICE-PRESIDENT**

Matt Skubel

### **SECRETARY & TREASURER**

Zoya Kalugina

### **MEMBERS:**

Sandy Dupuis

Margaret Jarrell

Patricia Menear

Nick Oreskovic

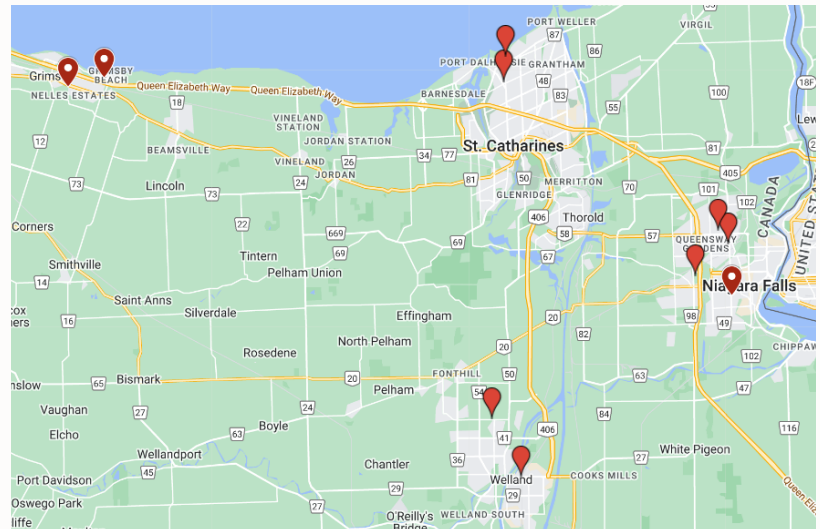
Angela Wyncimaga



## 2022 - 2023 AT A GLANCE

| CHILD CARE PROGRAM                | NUMBER OF FAMILIES | NUMBER OF CHILDREN |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Before & After Care (3 Locations) | 118                | 158                |
| Before & After Care (Grimsby)     | 33                 | 48                 |
| Margaret Jarrell Centre           | 43                 | 49                 |
| Pine Grove Child Care Centre      | 34                 | 34                 |
| Sven H. Dohnberg Centre           | 40                 | 41                 |
| Welland Parent Child Centre       | 47                 | 51                 |
| <b>Total:</b>                     | <b>315</b>         | <b>381</b>         |

## OUR LOCATIONS



**MAIN OFFICE**  
285 East Main St.  
Welland, ON L3B 3X1

**WELLAND PARENT CHILD CENTRE**  
285 East Main St.  
Welland, ON L3B 3X1

**PINE GROVE CHILD CARE**  
690 Lake St.  
St. Catharines, ON L2N 4J5

**SVEN H. DOHNBERG CENTRE**  
535 Lake St.  
St. Catharines, ON L2N 4H7

**MARGARET JARRELL CENTRE**  
118 Main St. East  
Grimsby, ON L3M 1N8

**GRIMSBY EARLYON**  
10 Grand Ave.  
Grimsby, ON L3M 2R7

### BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS

**NELLES PUBLIC SCHOOL**  
118 Main St. East  
Grimsby, ON L3M 1N8

**QUAKER ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL**  
333 Quaker Rd.  
Welland, ON L3C 3G7

**GREENDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL**  
5504 Montrose Rd.  
Niagara Falls, ON L2G 1K7

**NOTRE DAME CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
6559 Caswell St.  
Niagara Falls, ON L2J 1C2



From September 2022 - June 2023, the **Grimsby EarlyON Centre** had the following participation numbers:

|                                    |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Unique Children Served:            | 1,676 |
| Unique Parents/Caregivers Served:  | 1,524 |
| Visits Made by Children:           | 4,705 |
| Visits Made by Parents/Caregivers: | 3,927 |



## SEEDS OF EMPATHY PROGRAM

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In the Welland Parent Child Centre location, we have been piloting the Seeds of Empathy Program.

Seeds of Empathy was designed for early childhood settings to foster social and emotional competence, early literacy skills, and attitudes in children 3 - 5 years of age while providing professional development for their Educators.

Seeds of Empathy grew out of Roots of Empathy, a program for elementary school-aged children from JK to Grade 8. Where Seeds of Empathy focuses on the younger preschool group.

At the heart of the program here in Welland is our seeds baby “Teacher” Gael and his parent who visits the Centre throughout the year. In the program time, the children witness his growth, likes, dislikes and gains on the big Seeds of Empathy lavender blanket. This provides an opportunity for the children to identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feeling of others.

It has been an exciting journey to see our preschoolers be able to engage and witness in such an enriching program. We cannot wait to continue the program in the future.

*Micki Horton*

Director of Operations





# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR (ECE) UPDATE

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In October 2022, we celebrated the Educators in our Child Care Centres and programs to ensure they know how very much they are appreciated. On the National Day of recognition for the Child Care Workers and Early Childhood Educators, we celebrated them and all the ways that they contribute to Strive Niagara to bring quality licensed child care to the children and families that attend our programs.

Thank you for all of your continued hard work and dedication!



# STRIVE CLASSROOM UPDATE

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## WELLAND & NIAGARA FALLS UPDATE

What a year! We have so much to celebrate as we close out this past school year. Many secondary school credits earned, babies born, and with many graduates who are off to post-secondary endeavors in the fall.

Some of the highlights of our Outreach program, in addition to credits earned and life skills taught include; flower arranging, baking, embroidery (both hoop and clothing), knitting hats for NICU babies, gardening, sewing hair scrunchies, making sock monkeys, making self-care rice bags with soothing essential oils, creating paper mache, beading jewelry and learning to do weaving. It was incredible to watch the students learn so many new and practical skills!

This year we continued to lean into our community partners and as always are so grateful for their on-going support of our young parents.

A challenge we witnessed for our young families this year was associated with the rising costs of food and housing. More than ever before we have clients accessing food banks with urgency as well as asking for gift cards for groceries. We referred often to our local food banks and are grateful for their support.

In light of this increased financial struggle, we began having “resource tables” outside of our classrooms for our participants to access. On these tables, we placed hygiene items, non-perishable food donations (such as canned goods, cereal, pasta, and soup), and seasonal clothing donations. Families accessed these tables regularly.

We are sad to see our families go for the summer, but we are excited for all they have accomplished and we look forward to a new year ahead!

*Amy Marconi*

Family Support Promoter

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>WELLAND - Credits Achieved:</b>       | 30 |
| <b>WELLAND - Graduates:</b>              | 5  |
| <b>NIAGARA FALLS - Credits Achieved:</b> | 43 |
| <b>NIAGARA FALLS - Graduates:</b>        | 2  |

# STRIVE CLASSROOM UPDATE

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## ST. CATHARINES UPDATE

In addition to the classroom curriculum, in St. Catharines our participants completed the 10-week Building Resilience program with Public Health. We completed a three-series program with the District School Board of Niagara's (DSBN) employment counselor on budgeting/cutting costs, cashier and customer service training, as well as Microsoft Office training.

The participants worked on attachment/bonding, parenting skills, self-regulation, developed coping skills to manage mental health, and learned about healthy relationships both intimate, friendship, and family relationships.

It was a successful year and we look forward to seeing our participants return again for the next school year. We wish a congratulations and all the best to our 2023 graduates!

*Melissa Milava*

Family Support Promoter

ST. CATHARINES- Credits Achieved:

60

ST. CATHARINES - Graduates:

6

*“Attending Strive has made me become a more mature person and the best mom I can be to my son. It gave me another chance at life and gave me a better shot at making something of my life.”*

*-Past Strive Participant*



# CAPC/CPNP UPDATE



## COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN (CAPC) - Niagara Brighter Futures CANADA PRENATAL NUTRITION PROGRAM (CPNP) - Healthy from the Start

This year has been a successful year for both CAPC and CPNP programs. While we have continued to offer virtual programming to families, the CAPC Niagara Brighter Futures program has successfully opened up three (3) additional drop in programs this year.

Currently our CAPC program is running in-person programming Monday mornings at the EarlyON Centre in Bethlehem Place located in St. Catharines, Tuesday mornings at Strive Niagara located in Welland, and Wednesday mornings at both the EarlyON Centre in Thorold and the Niagara Falls Public Library.

We are excited to be back into in-person programming as well as continuing to offer the hybrid model of programming to families and individuals. This has allowed the CAPC program to support a wider range of families both in-person and virtually.

Over the past year, CAPC has continued to offer the Ready to Learn Program for children entering into Kindergarten in 2024. This Ready to Learn program offered over March break 2023 at full capacity with children and their caregiver. With the positive feedback we received from the community, CAPC staff will be running an additional two (2) sessions over the summer to assist in preparing children for kindergarten this upcoming September.

This year CPNP Healthy from the Start has also offered a hybrid model of programming. Healthy from the Start is currently running in-person programming Tuesday mornings at Strive Niagara located in Welland. Healthy from the Start is currently opening an additional in-person program Wednesday mornings at the Niagara Falls Public Library. All participants attending the drop-in program will have access to pregnancy support, childbirth, mom and baby aftercare, and healthy eating. Anyone attending the Healthy from the Start program will be eligible for free prenatal vitamins, vitamin D drops, and healthy snacks.

We have found over this past year pregnant individuals have been reluctant to attend in- person programming, however by having a hybrid model of programming available to participants this has allowed us to support pregnant individuals both in-person and virtually while continuing to offer prenatal support.

CAPC and CPNP staff are excited to be back in-person and are looking forward to another year successful year with in-person with our families.

*Courtney Hansen*  
Project Manager

### LOCATIONS

**WELLAND**  
Strive Niagara  
285 East Main St.

**ST. CATHARINES**  
Bethlehem Place  
58 Welland Ave.

**THOROLD**  
EarlyON Centre  
15 Pine St.

**NIAGARA FALLS**  
Public Library  
4848 Victoria Ave.

**CAPC Brighter Futures Families:** 113

**CAPC Brighter Futures Participation (Children and Adults):** 1,179

**CPNP Healthy From the Start Number of Pregnant Individuals:** 27

**VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING:**  
MS Teams Link

# STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS & FUND BALANCES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

|   | <u>2022</u>         | <u>2021</u>         |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Revenue</b>                            |                     |                     |
| Municipal government grants and subsidies | \$ 2,853,744        | \$ 1,975,945        |
| Federal government grants and subsidies   | 508,639             | 480,354             |
| Fee for service                           | 627,084             | 410,745             |
| Ontario Trillium Foundation               | 6,567               | -                   |
| Other income                              | 875                 | -                   |
| United Way                                | 45,482              | 27,516              |
| Branscombe Family Foundation              | 37,728              | 28,272              |
| Donations                                 | 18,330              | 115,175             |
| Deferred Contributions, capital assets    | 14,670              | 16,721              |
|   | <u>\$ 4,113,119</u> | <u>\$ 3,054,728</u> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                           |                     |                     |
| Administration                            | \$ 78,270           | \$ 46,266           |
| Amortization                              | 39,119              | 42,165              |
| Occupancy                                 | 242,833             | 357,492             |
| Program and professional fees             | 214,213             | 117,165             |
| Salaries and benefits                     | 2,796,959           | 2,732,786           |
|   | <u>\$ 3,371,394</u> | <u>\$ 3,295,874</u> |
| Other Income (Government Subsidies)       | -                   | (442,313)           |
| Excess of revenue over expenses           | 741,725             | 201,167             |
| Fund balances, beginning of year          | <u>\$ 1,087,949</u> | <u>\$ 886,782</u>   |
| Fund balances, end of year                | <u>\$ 1,829,674</u> | <u>\$ 1,087,949</u> |

**Charitable Registration #**  
139423859RR0001

# OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to our funders, community partners, and supporters over this past year. Your new and continued support is very much appreciated.

## FUNDED BY



Public Health  
Agency of Canada

Agence de santé  
publique du Canada

## SUPPORTED BY

Ontario  
Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium  
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

The Branscombe  
Family Foundation



United Way  
Niagara



## COMMUNITY SUPPORT



Beatties

